The Moods of Gwynn Myrick

GEORGE H. BADGER

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THE MOODS *of* GWYNN MYRICK

With Other Poems

BY

GEORGE HENRY BADGER

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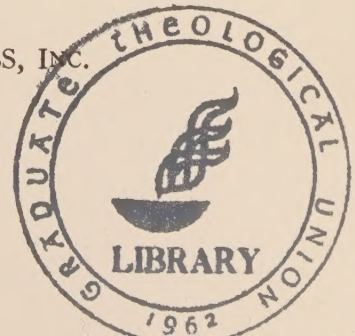

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A. H. B.

Dear-heart, they're meagre and few,
And the worth of them all is slight;
Yet I bring them here, just for you, —
And I know somehow here in your sight
Shall be wisdom and grace and beauty o'erfine
Added unto their meanness — because they are mine!

There's a Poem ne'er shall fall into rhyme:
There's a Song ne'er shall echo through word;
'Tis the poem we have lived, — joyous time:
'Tis the song our hearts only have heard,
As in the great climb of life's secret of love
We have stood where but God and his heaven were above.

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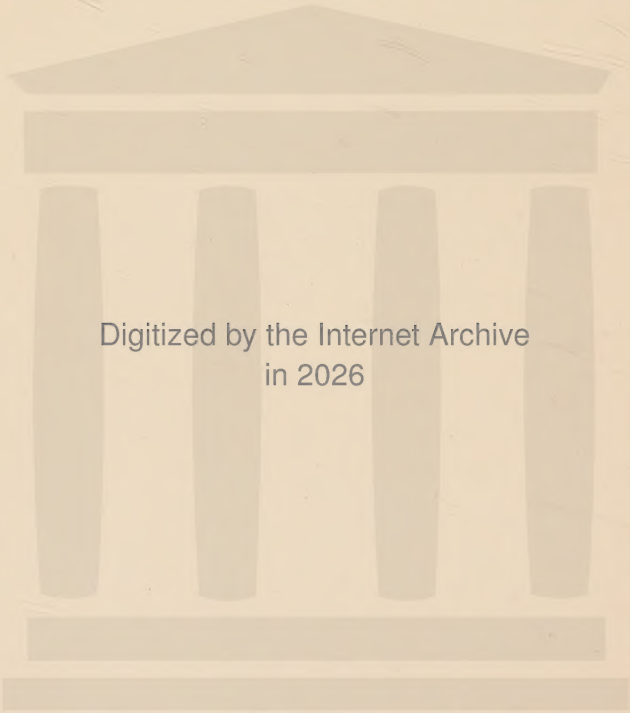
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THE MOODS OF GWYNN MYRICK

GWYNN MYRICK

Strange, whimsical, tempestuous soul:
But half myself, and half my wayward mood,
In fancy's lightly feigned similitude
Of other than myself: — a wantoning role
That slips too oft my calmer will's control;
And, fevered by some glimpse of half-wrought good,
Or fired at rage of wrong half understood,
Leaps to rash ecstasy of tangent goal
Rough-guessed the way of truth! Though rude the skill
And harsh the unkempt accent of his speech,
Perchance some window to the way of God
May open through his vision, all unawed;
And his most daring mood some insight reach,
Beyond my measured thought, — my fettered will!

THE MARVEL OF THE SEA

It is so simple, — yet it means so much in wonder: —
This marvel of the sea!
Merely a thousand widespread leagues of watery waste,
Monotonously restless, —
Up and down, — down and up, in meaningless commotion:
What happens here, as well ten thousand fathoms yonder;
Only what happens now has happened here through ages; . . .
Then this flat marge of glistening beach-sand,
Miles upon miles the same, senseless in contour, tintless, —
With here and there a random snarl of rock out-jutting,
Spilled about wastefully, as not worth attention,
In some low age of crude creation-craft: —
Unordered, bleak and grey, —
Forever grey, bleak, orderless:
What in the small were dull, tame, meagre-toned and formless,
Just here exaggerated to unbounded bigness: . . .
Just here exalted to triumphant vastness!
This makes the marvel of the sea!

I wait before its vision, silent, glowing, all-exultant;
My soul over-runs with eagerness of seeing;
It is the Face Eternal!
The Presence of the Infinite!
I see the smile, hear the glad rhythm of laughter,
Feel the fine breath of Nature's passionate quiet,
And pulsing zest of Being,
In all this wide, superb expanse of beauty,

Till I am gathered, heart and soul, within it, —
To share the palpitating wonder of it,
And be, myself, — myself, — the glory that I see!
For least of all is it substance, —
Water, sand and rock-cliff. . . .
Most of all it is Spirit, pure and quenchless,
Careless of detail, —
Sublimely conquering substance, —
Eye to eye fronting me, — Comrade of my soul!

How it seeks out, — finds, and then acquaints me,
Spirit that I am, with my vast Overself!
It calls to me, —
Calls with a voice compelling,
And searching through the heart's deep secrets of aspiring,
Winnowing the fine quintessence of best memories,—
Divine residium of child-dreams, boy-hopes, youth's ambitions,
Till they resolve to holy mist of memory,
So tender and so strong, —
Mingles therewith best yearnings for the present, —
Hopings, dreamings, aspirations, . . .
The passion of ideals never spoken of, but eager;
And with creative artifice builds of this stuff illusive
The better Self than I; — myself triumphant:
Real for the moment, though tomorrow mock me; —
What I would be, ought to be, — and shall be, —
With God co-dwelling, to Eternity.

It haunts me, —
It besets me with vast questionings, —

Not of perplexity or dismaying doubts, —
But urgent in strange grace of curiosity:
"Were it possible?" "May there not haply be?"
Holy "*perhaps*" of answers deep and glorious
To what the soul asks at its best of wonderings:
And, — for no answer comes in voices final,
But just the pause, peace, witching grace continue, —
Horizon still has mist-line, waves are yet so wanton,
Sky so broad, air sweet, and sea-roar hushless, —
The soul's rare satisfaction grows on that which is not answered, —
Brings no deft solutions, clues, interpretations: —
This that lies all open, —
This defineless joy of beauty: —
Such is the marvel of the sea.

Shall I dare own the secret? . . .
Sea outspread before me, endless waste of waters,
Marge of sand, disorder wild of rock-ledge,
Sky openness, vagaries of cloud-shadow,
Dim horizon, wide and mysterious,
Purpling wreck of wave-crag, —
All these I see, spread out in endless vision: . . .
But theirs is not the beauty, final, scapeless, and divine;
It is not what I gaze on, —
It is the soul I gaze with, —
Makes the triumphant glory of the caressing vision!
Huge canvas, they, — rude, spacious, coarse, ill-fitting, —
On which my soul projects its ache of beauty, —
Finds for itself occasion for deep being, —
Satisfies itself, — almost! — with strange self-mirroring.

It is not the Face of God
That infinitely meets me, incarnate here
In Nature's bulking presence;
Rather the Soul of God that gazes with me, — through me, —
Finds Himself — for me — in what I gaze on,
Because He finds Himself
A part of just what I am now,
As here I gaze and numb my self of fleshness
By contact with this overmastering mass
Of Nature's wild carouse of spaciousness.
It is my soul's own beauty, — aspiration, portent, —
Secret best, veiled now in present imperfection
Of daily deed and thought and failing action, —
Yet real with God, —
Potential to eternity in the deep core
Of what is most Myself: —
Sharing with God in infinite mode of progress: —
This is the secret of this beauty marvel, —
The marvel of the sea.

OUT OF POVERTY

There goes the man I envy: —
How to my soul's dregs do I envy him!
For he lives, —
Eagerly, intensely, passionately lives, —
To the last fine thrill of living!
Mark how his eyes glow with a flame of splendid rashness!
Note the firm molding of that grim mouth and yieldless
chin, —
Withal so subtly sensitive;
See how his face fronts strongly to a purpose
That dominates his being with a merciless impatience,
Ardent, exhilarate, resolute, nobly stubborn!

For his soul burns with the glory of an eager Cause:
Through and through his heart believes in it;
Without a doubt believes in it;
With all the ache of stern delight believes in it;
And ruthless is his wrath against all doubters!

All that he has will he give,
And all that he is is consecrate;
All that he can endure or suffer or staunchly sacrifice, —
That counts he gain, — his regal victory of soulship, —
All for his One Great Cause!

He has lost friends;
He has forfeited success as the world might give it;
He has parched his soul of all Art's nice refreshment,

Brought poverty to his children, —
(*Oh, how his children love him!*)
He has miserably failed when battling for his Cause, —
(*Time and time again has he failed*) —
Yet failing, never lost faith, triumphant in his failing, —
Living the vast, strange ecstasy of faith.

I, in my wisdom, know that his Cause is folly;
(*O God of holy causes, why must my soul be placid?*) —
There goes the man I envy, —
To the dregs of my soul I envy him!
He is rich: I am poor, — so wretchedly poor! —
Because I am wiser than he!

Was God not heeding?
Just for one flitting time-flake of Eternity
Was He not heeding?
He gave me beauty, — soft, twilight-shy and pensive;
And gave me gifts of heart, sensitive and eager,
And mind, aspiring to nobility;
And gave me a soul, hungry, oh, so hungry
For things that bring life charm, —
Knowledge and art and song,
And the rare, rich grace of love:
So did God give; then strangely mingled these
With such malign heredity —
Passionate, rash and wayward,
Heedless of the moment,
Then waking to such agonies of after-shame!
And he set me there, mid crushing walls of poverty,
(Oh, that numbing, narrowing, soul-stifling prison-cell
Of pinching poverty!) — . . .
And opened one door out,
One little strait door out, — wide-open: . . .
And through its opening smile
Came the glow of Life, — beyond it,
Warm, eager, spacious, soul-saturating Life, — beyond it: —
And there, — beyond it, — were the smiles of men. . . .
I did not know . . . so friendly were those smiles of men . . .
I did not know . . .
And God forgot to let me die!

FAITH TRIUMPHANT

Father, thou hast not blessed me as I dreamed,
And poor my lot in life has been indeed;
Yet thou hast met, each day, my common need, —
And lo! the glory of the Dream increaseth!
Deal with me harshly howso'er it pleaseth,
That Dream thy gift, faith's pawn is full redeemed.

THOSE CLOUDS UP THERE

Those clouds up there:
Huge, strange, wonderful, fantastical, mystical, —
Are they Nature's dreams?
Or her fanciful imaginings,
While she muses on creation?
I wonder. . . .

There she dreams mountains,
Vast, noble, heaven-climbing,
Out of dim horizons. . . .

There she spreads an ocean, —
Note the slumberous sea-color, —
Note the spanning depths of shadow . . .
And the stupendous calms of infinite spaces! . . .

There she flings continents,
Bold-outlined across hemispheres; . . .

And there she affectionately sprinkles islands,
Social, — intimate:
Suggesting hospitable harbours and nestling populations. . . .

And there she weaves with daintier deftness:
Feather-schemes, and weird flower-schemes;
Bird-forms, beast-forms,
And such grotesquenesses of reptiles!
And man-mimicking castles and minarets,
And palaces, and proud capitols. . . .

And there, —
Over yonder, — look! —
Over there . . .
That isn't form, . . . that isn't mass, . . .
That isn't outline, — just to see with the eyes. . . .
There dream gets beyond mere shapings:
There imaginings plunge beneath viewed surfaces. . . .
Oh, — that fine yearning of color's wraith,
And that quintessent wine of form
And inner dream of substance! . . .
Note, — note, —
It is as though a Soul . . .
Diviner than human soul has ever been in all the ages, —
Or human soul has ever dreamed to be: —
(*Only the Soul of Nature dreams that way!*) —
Something of a triumph of soul-stuff that is not yet. . . .
But Nature dreams . . . "*Perhaps . . . some day . . .*"
— That yearning thrill of cloud-veil!

It's all like our human dreams and imaginings:
So much of it is empty folly;
And so much that seems at its moment
Intense with eager meaning
Drifts off into futile vagueness. . . .
And so much blurs quickly its fumbling lines
To a smudge of voiding dullness, —
As though the cosmic Dreamer
Peevishly rubbed out in sheer impatience
His blundering sketch-work, —
To try it all over again. . . .

And sometimes,
When in the dream
A wondrous beauty comes, —
Nobility transcending anything Earth ever yet arrived at, —
With a meaning beyond all meanings ever dreamed of, —
Worth holding for eternity! —
Form fit to fix in some everlasting mountain,
Or vast, strange sea, — or continent, —
Or soul of Godlike living. . . .
Just then the pattern crumbles,
And the dream drifts off, —
Wrecked in the mock of vain imagining. . . .

So Nature dreams, like us, —
Imagines, . . . weaves her fancies . . .
All the day long . . . all eternity long. . . .

Some of it's quite worth while:
Most of it's to be wasted.

BETH-EL

I said, "I will worship God, to-day;"
So hastened to God's House to pray;
With scorn shut the door of my work-shop bare, —
Thinking to leave behind me there
The drudging fret of earth's mean life:
Toil's grime, temptation's wrangling strife: . . .
And lo, — at the House of God did find —
It was God Himself I had left behind!

MY SEA OF HILLS

There spreads my Sea of hills:
Billow on billow rising exultant, —
Crowding on one another,
Leaping to touch the sky;
Bathed ever in their distance-haze of blue, —
Tone-colored as the sea. . . .
But oh, — so still!

It is as though, long ages past,
A mighty passion of tremendous joy
Swept over the land
As tides sweep over the ocean,
Till the solid earth broke into a surge of joyance, —
Danced as the waves,
And laughed as mighty breakers, —
Rash, tumultuous, restless, eager: . . .

Then, all at once, —
God spoke:
And from His Heaven
Breathed the Hush eternal! . . .

Yet the waves fell not back:
And the surge of the joy did not relapse;
But, dashing to the sky,
The exultant leap was fixed, —
Earth's aspiration stands forever, —
Steadfast! . . .
Behold, — this Sea of Hills! . . .

Ah, — but this soul of mine:
This human soul of mine, —
Up-leaping, down-falling, rash, eager, impetuous, —
Lashing with wild ambitions,
High impulses, daring hopes, yearning aspirations, —
Restless as the sea, the passionate sea, —
(That sea of hushless Voice
Whose splendid rage was my strange joy
A month ago —
Up with a noble surge, titanic,
Heaved the vast sea-urgeance, —
Mountainlike, — and soul-like! . . .
Then the splendor of the crown of spray,
The thunderous shout,
Majestic crash of breaking, —
And then, . . .
Ah, then — the downfall:
Levelling to strange calmness, —
Yawning abyss of the retreating tide, —
Dismayful. . . .
Then again, and again, —
And again! . . .
Fresh glory of surge
Mountainlike, — and soul-like! —
Rising, — falling, — restless, —
Never silent) . . .
Such was the ocean's madness:
Such, O my soul, your restless aspiration!

God:
Out of Thy Heaven speak forth!

Out of Thy Heaven
Breathe Thy strange Hush eternal:
That restless passion in my soul
Lift to a tideless glory;
That this yearning leap of spirit heavenward
In the climb of prayer
Never fall back. . . .
But with the hush of Heaven,
Triumphant in Thy holy peace, —
With mountain-joy achieving,
Stand as these glorious hills, —
Forever steadfast!

COMRADES OF THE ROAD

Stars of the strange, still sky,
That thrill with mystic light,
I know not what may lurk beyond
Your curtain-pall of night:

But ye, and God, and I
Are comrades of the road:
Oh wondrous peace, oh strength secure,
Be ours, who fare with God!

ON THE SANDS

Ogunquit, Maine

There spreads the magnificent Sea:
So vastly tranquil, —
So infinitely noble;
Reaching . . . reaching . . . reaching . . .
Out to the dim mystery
Of the grey horizon, —
Strangely far away! . . .

And there's the majesty of the great Sky,
Overbrooding:
The infinitely mysterious Sky;
All the huge world
Gathered into its handful; . . .
Divinely patient, —
That speechless, God-uttering blue Sky: . . .
So vast! . . .

And off there,
Out of the landward sky-line,
With resolute shouldering
Lifts that stern mass of Mountain,
Proud of its everlasting strength:
(*The strength of the hills is His also, saith God*) —
Shouting across its interval
To the Sea,
And proclaiming with bold dignity
To the vault of the Sky:

"Yes, — you are vast, magnificent, majestic, —
You two:
Steeped with mystic awe,
Saturated with divinity, —
Both of you. . . .
But here am I, — the Mountain:
With age-enduring strength
And everlasting glory!
We three together
Chime Creation's chord of beauty: —
The three-fold elemental majesty!" . . .

And playing on the sands of the beach
Is my little joy of a child, —
Just a wee scrap of her:
She has found a quaint creature of the sands
All legs and shell, —
So droll. . . .
And she is gazing at it
With all her big grey eyes, —
Wondering . . . wondering. . . .
And I tell you,
That scrap of a child
With her big, wide-open eyes,
Wondering . . . wondering . . .
Is more of a thing, —
A thousand times holier worth, —
Than all the vast mystery of the Sea,
Or world-spanning majesty of the Sky,
Or lordly grandeur of the everlasting Mountain!

The divinest thing in the whole world
This day, — for me, —
Is that wee mite of a child, —
My own:
Gazing at that quaint sea-crab
With her celestial, wide-open eyes . . .
Wondering . . . wondering. . . .

THE CLOUD FLAKE

All the vast sky above me spread,
So blue, so blue:
Ocean of silence asleep o'er my head, —
Eternity's hue:
And on it one cloud-flake, one coil of strange light
Sails all alone, glorious in isolate flight, —
So tiny, so slight,
So valiantly bright!
I care not for ocean of vast-spreading blue;
I see not the span of eternity's hue:
That cloud-flake's the sky, for me!

POETRY

Sometimes I think that Poetry is the singing of a song-sparrow:
Simple, eager, joy-saturated;
With the magic of lilting laughter
Leaping out of nestling tenderness . . .
And so much more than laughter
In the magic of it!

And sometimes I think that Poetry is the wind
That slaps you in the face,
Coming off from the sea
With shrill whistling,
And smiting sting of life in its saltness;
Yet it's vibrant with strong sunshine. . . .
And there's that wonder of the frolic of light
Dancing in the sheen of the sea; . . .
And beneath the frolicking sheen of the sea, . . .
You know: . . . deep, — dark . . .
What may be tragedy!

And sometimes I think that Poetry is the roar of a crowded city street: —
(*Lower Broadway at the noon hour*) —
Everybody going his own way;
Hurrying on his own errand;
Thinking his own thought
As though nobody else were on the street but he. . . .
But such a throng of them, all together!
And some of the ways are bad ways;

And some of the errands are glad errands;
And some of the thoughts are drenched with despair;
But so many other sorts of thoughts
And errands and ways, as well, —
As many differences as people, — noble and ignoble; —
Yet it all makes One Thing, —
All together! . . .
One Thing that is beautiful, — wonderful, — tragic,—
All together: . . .
That marvelous hum and stir
And chanting roar
Of people thronging a city street . . .
All together!

And sometimes I think that Poetry is Silence, — under the stars:
When you just feel
The ecstatic Bigness of Things: —
The Mystery and the Grandeur,
And the solemn Dignity,
And the tremendous Joy,
And the strange, comforting Calm
Of the Bigness of Things!

Well, — there's the ugly fact of it:
Yes, I am a coward:
Through and through, —
All that's in me is craven. . . .
I know the hideous whole of it,
And the reeking shame of it: —
Don't I know it utterly! . . .

But there's this to be said:
I've courage not to lie about it, —
No, — not even to myself.
I face the nasty truth starkly.
Straight-eyed, — no balking, —
I know what I am;
And I know what it all means: . . .
How every nerve in me cringes at fright, —
Cheeks blanch, heart goes mad with panic,
Spirit crumples to dirty, dank rags,
When anything whatsoever, —
The slightest, —
That has threat of hurt, or pain, or risk,
Leaps roughly my way.

And I don't make cheat
That it's all in the flesh, merely:
To be philosophised over,
And smugly apologised for;
That's not my way of lying, either.
It's spirit, — not simply nerves;

I am all afraid, —
Shivering, — body and soul, —
When aught for body or soul
Threatens dismay. . . .
That's what I am, — a Coward:
Through and through a Coward:
I make no lies about it, whatsoever.

How I ache and sting and torture
With the shame of it, — afterwards!
. . . Always — *afterwards!*
Over and over and over again, —
Always — *afterwards!*

That's just the sort of fool I am! . . .
For why shame?
What's to be ashamed of?
Why feel the need of lying about it, anyway?
I say I have nothing to be ashamed of, —
Absolutely!
It's not my doing or my fault;
I have no part in it whatsoever
That calls for shame.
I did not make myself what I am;
I was given no choice in the matter.
There was a cringing mess of nerves,
There was a craven trick of pulse and heart, —
There was a palsying blight of spirit, —
Waiting for me . . . waiting for me . . . waiting for me. . . .

Grim fate of ruthless heredity
Waiting for my poor soul — when it should be born, —
And soon as I came to be,
That greedy demon of heredity
Pounced upon me. . . .
It was mine, — It was *I!* —
Forever to be *me* while I have life:
Whatever I am to be forever, —
Through all being, —
Hard fixed for me, ere I began to be. . . .
So here I am, — the Coward!

I say it is not my doings:
And it is not my shame!
There's God:
Look to Him for it: . . .
Why isn't He ashamed: — not I!

Do I try to fight against it, —
Grimly, — forlornly?
Clinch my teeth achingly,
Brace my craven muscles, —
Body and soul wrestling against themselves: —
Something within me that's great, despite myself
Crying out for some primeval triumph of myself
Fate and heredity cannot quench?
Despite quaking flesh and quivering nerves,
Despite cringing spirit and faltering heart,
Do I yet agonize to face dangers and dismays staunchly,
With driven resoluteness,
And match a will against a Will, —

Warring of self against myself
To win gaunt victory
Over the meanness of myself . . .
And gain that last quintessence of fine courage:
Daring, — though trembling:
Risking, — though mad with fright? . . .

Sometimes I do, . . .
And sometimes I don't:
Let's be honest about it.
When I do, I flame with exultation,
Throb with a splendid pride,
Cry out with soul's bold ecstasy of conquering . . .
Dream that I have felt a throb of God! . . .
When I don't, I welter in my shame, —
Cringing, blistering, tormenting shame;
Over and over and over again: —
Afterwards . . .
Always — *afterwards!* . . .

Well, — what of it?
Why, sometimes it's one way,
Sometimes the other:
And tomorrow, — next time, —
How do I know which way it will turn, —
The exulting, — or the torment?
. . . I can't tell!

Probably God means something by it;
That's what a God is for.
Perhaps God made me to be what I am,

Because something of what He is
Demands my sort as well.
Perhaps in the outworking
Of some far, divine scheme-of-things
In the vast abyss of Mystery,
It will somehow count for something, —
Some part be played that only could be played
In the final consummation of achieving Glory
By one of my sort, —
None else could do. . . .
One weak and contemptible in my way, —
Doing my ignominious sort of thing my way . . .
None else could do.

I don't know!
I say again, the fault's not mine,
And the shame's not mine: —
God had the doing of it.
It's for Him to prove,
Someday, —
How it's worth while!

ON A RAILWAY SLEEPER

(Impromptu)

We have paused for a moment,
I know not where:
The engine pants hotly its passion of prayer
In the lull of its reek of impetuous flare,
At the shrine of this station's grime, —
I know not where. . . .
Only I know, far behind in the night
I have left in glad flight
One place that is dear, is dear as the day, —
Miles away. . . .
And I'm speeding thence to greet in the dawn
The one heart that's life! — Where now may we be?
Let the stars heed the place, it is nothing to me!
I've no care for the Here,
And Now is nowhere, —
'Tis that place of farewell, 'tis that face of the dawn
Is place for me, — grace for me, — engine, rush on! . . .
While I tangle a dream with the ghost of a prayer: . . .
Mad engine, — crash on, — on, — on!

SLEEP

How good it is to sleep! . . .
To put the hush of darkness
Between what was
And what is going to be;
To gaze up to the wondrous stars,
So silent and so tender, —
So far apart from all that fouls our day,
Yet steadfast in their brooding calm of friendliness: . . .
Then to close one's eyes:
And lose oneself
In the vast Sea of Silence —
That is God!
To wrap oneself about
With the still mystery
Of the ineffable life —
So holier, nobler, purer than all earthliness:
And thus,
Oneself forgetting, —
Sleep. . . .

Then comes another day:
Clean, fresh, beautiful:
Past things are past, —
The flush of dawn's remedial.
Heart's faiths wax stronger,
Braver glow ideals;
New day — new hold on life, —
New self, regenerate. . . .
Because in sleep's baptism,

One's soul was buried in God . . .
Then rises cleansed —
In daily resurrection. . . .
So good it is to sleep!

UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION

(As Who Might Cry in Secret)

God is not fair with me! Where is the infinite justice?
Where the all-searching right, the 'scapeless passion
Of the eternal Goodness throned in heaven?
I wait beneath these stars, so cold, so distant, —
Wondrously serene to music cadence,
In all this pulsing silence of the fragrant night, —
Gazing up to them, yes, and beyond them gazing, —
On and on, to catch some shadow-light
Of dim, strained ecstasy of infinite glow
That lurks behind them, mystery of their mystery: —
I, a meagre soul, wait in my ignorance,
Here in this little gasp of eddying space
And fluttering fleck of time, — and glimpse these stars,
And know them! Know the wonder of their distance,
Comprehend their glory, feel their mystery
And the vast Unity of Infinite Being
That gathers them all in with cosmic brooding;
Know them for what they are, — but that's the lesser, —
As part too of myself, my meagre self;
For such I am, — to know so vastlier
Than what I am, in what's so vast above me!

I bask in all the wonder, beauty of it,
Awe and hush and soothing mystery of it:
And my soul dreams out to other things: —
The poetry and the joy, the song and music,
The pathos and the pain, — grey tragedy, —
Heroisms, saintships, sacrifices holy,

That weave the fabric of humanity;
So much of it before I was, so much
Outreaching far my slender touch upon it;
And yet the glory of its high achievements, —
Poems greatly sung, grand architectures reared,
Divine dreams of religion, splendid valors, —
Accumulating age on age their rich tradition, —
All this I grasp, appropriate to my being; —
Ay, knowing best of this and all its glory,
Dream of better still, the infinite joy
And flawless grace and high nobility
Of what were possible, yet is not now,
Nor ever has been, — soul's ideal of glory: —
And name the name of God!

Rapturously my soul dilates in joyance,
Hushed in fine silence of this splendid night,
Here beneath these stars of doomlike distance,
Caught in the rushing glory of this progress
Of great humanity: — I with soul so slight,
Yet comprehending all and finding strangely
The very bigness of my soul's own being
In all this mantling vastness of the All: —
When suddenly, — (*here is God's injustness, cruelty*) —
My soul shrivels with a pang, flashing lightning, —
A scorching blight of withering, damning shame!
For I remember, yesterday, — no farther, —
I did a deed, mean, dastardly, contemptible,
Such as all good men scorn: — I did it, yesterday:
Not with the least discomfort or shy shrinking,
Did it without revulsion, — satisfied

And all self-justifying, then, I did it!
But now I know its meanness, loathe its foulness,
Burn, ache and torture in its welt of shame,
Because I did it!

I say, I did not do it!
I say, 'twas God who did it! God Almighty:
God making me to be just what I am,
And making my poor circumstance of life
To be just as it is. I have a friend, —
Ah, how I love him! So do all that know him.
Every deed he does is gracious, noble, —
Surpassingly unselfish, kind; all his pure life
A singing joy to other lives that touch his.
He cannot help it, — (*here is God's injustice!*) —
Good is just the habit of his being,
Ay, his inheritance and heredity.
Before he lived a noble line of forbears, —
Well-born men and dainty women gathered
To fine quintessence of heredity
Their sweet and splendid passion of good-doing;
And when he came he did but richly enter
A treasured dower of life's high chance for manhood, —
Brave, pure, high-impulsed, honorable,
Soul of sunshine, clouds not intervening.
Not so with me. Because, before my being,
Some men cramped life to petty pinch of meanness,
Some men shirked manhood, and some women stained
Their grace of being with unloveliness,

And I, — not from my choice, — came of their line,
The mould of their living made the stamp of mine, —
Hence to me comes the hour, and again, and again,
When meanness knocks at my door, and ignominy,
And weak poltroonery, and the lust of self;
And in their hour I know them not for baseness, —
I open the door, and am at home in comfort
With their close kennelling. Only bye and bye
The hour rolls on, — another comes, — and I know: —
Cringe, shudder, agonize in shame!
For so God made me, — so the eternal God
Fixed me, without my willing, in the stream
Of the inexorable law of life's transmission, —
Creation's direst tragedy of being, —
This monstrous, cruel fate, — scapeless heredity!
'Twas God, I say, who did it!

Whence comes my comfort?
Rejoice I yet to find remorse falls on me?
That I suffer in such withering scorch of shame?
Rejoice that I can so far share some crumbs
Of his high feasting whose inheritance
Is blameless soul, nature immune to meanness, —
That I at least, though but on tardy morrow
Can tell by ache the woeful difference
'Twixt honor and the stoop of turpitude? —
Count that a gift of God that he's not left me
Incapable of torture for my shame:
Doing the dastard deed, nor loathing yet
Myself for the doing of it? Ay, and more: —
May I dare hope, and rashly dream, for comfort,

That just because such destiny is mine, —
This birthright curse of baseness life's besetting
For my lean soul, — so much the more if conquering,
By rage of strife outworking this foul birthright, —
Third and fourth generation's curse outwitting,
And sharing through such triumph some small sliver, —
(Yet finely smolten in the fires of discipline) —
Of thousandth generation's heritage
Of manhood's blessing, sometime I gain this end: —
That soul of another in some far posterity
Shall braver live, holier, nobler act,
And more divinely joy in soul's best joyance, —
Shame-free, kindred with God, more Godlike
Than e'er could have been its portion had not I
Now shame-beset fought out a way of honor
With bitter, tingling, aching toil of conquest?

Who shall tell? How shall I tell? Likely
'Twill be tomorrow's shame and ignominy
And crimsoning realization of my blight of soul,
That I have waited with these stars, tonight,
And felt the fragrant breath of this rare evening,
And dreamed such dreams, and felt such stir of manhood,
And paused to think of God, — great God, at all: —
Yet looked to sky and stars, all unabashed,
And dared to cry: — *God is not fair with me!*

This Soul within my soul, — is it not I?
Oh, but my daily self is weak and mean and paltry;
Perverse in blundering sin, and dwarfed in ignorance;
Surging with base passion, crude and coarse;
Wasteful of roseate time; spoiling the crystal day
With laggard indolence; meagre of attainment,
And toying with heart's sacred fire too often,
To cringe, next hour, with the ache of scorching shame!
And yet, within it all, — here is the wonder, —
Still flames the eager glory of my soul's Ideal,
Noble, exultant, pure, and fine and high!
Still towers this mastering sense of What I Might Be,
Still climbs this marvel of my spirit's dream, —
This strong and scapeless faith of *what shall be!*
I bow before the Vision, worship at the shrine
Of this, my soul's Ideal of itself, — itself triumphant, —
And call it God!

Then out of its dust my spirit rises, towering to front its shrine,
Not on its knees,
But level-eyed, on proud feet standing,
And cries out boldly, all undoubting, eager; —
"This Soul within my soul, this soul's Ideal, —
It is myself, not other, — it is I!
My sure and steadfast self, baffled e'er while,
Thwarted by flesh, hindered and sore harassed,
Obscured, — maltreated by the circumstance

That weaves temptation's tangling fret of destiny,
Heredity's weird fetterings, world's mean setting;
Myself, my holiest All, — persistent, eager;
And some day it shall conquer, — I as I!"

O God, Almighty, Infinite and Glorious!
Thou whom the Heaven of heavens contains not ever!
I worship Thee, in endless adoration.
Vast Thy creation; vast Thy revelation: —
Majesty of sky, the awesome stars, and all earth's wonder
Are but Thy ceaseless Utterance, passion of Thy Presence!
But most within the secret of my being, —
This nestling wonder of my soul's Ideal,
And urging dream, and glow of holy vision, —
Great God, I know Thy presence, radiant revelation,
And holy touch of sweet Companionship!

O God within myself: — what art Thou? What am I?
This that is most Myself, is it not Thou?
And this that is Thy holiest Presence, — is it I?
Where in the brooding of the Spirit's deepening mystery
Ceases my soul to be its own Ideal — in Thee?
Or finds my soul in God — Itself, to know its soulhood!

Then shall I worship but to find Myself, triumphant?
Then shall I kneel but to attain my own?
Then shall I struggle, — ay, with God's own passion,
Now with a nobler calm and strength of peace in purpose,
To beat down that which is my Self's opponent, —
My meagre self — less God — Ideal's betrayer?

Then shall I pray as with a self-communing,
Humbled before Myself: abased before my Soul?
O God, — O Soul within my soul, O holy Presence:
When I shall know Thee most, — then most shall I be I?

I WONDERED GREYLY

I wondered greyly why God is.
Out of a moody maze of aching discontent,
And brooding bafflement of strange temptation,
I struck out straight at the heart of things
And hurled my challenge boldly: —
"What's God Worth?"

Yes: the Inviolate Order, mysterious Soul of Unity,
The passion of the Ultimate Energy welling thro' all being, —
These have their seeming argument and mask of logic;
But lift the crust, peer but behind the mask,
And, O my soul, what shall you find for comfort?
Yes, the Inviolate Order,
Everywhere triumphant, braggard and tyrannic;
Yet ransack Earth, scour the sheer heavens,
Hunt to the dust of trifles,
And find one type, one form, one little shred of substance
That does not somewhere fail and bungle in completion:
I say it is not there: and the Great Order triumphs
Only by bullying truce twixt myriad imperfection,
Dead-centered in the spilling void of failures.

I gaze aloft: there are those staring stars,
Cold, distant, changeless, wantonly aloof:
Feigning a weird sublimity and elemental awe.
What do they mean? Eternity's bleak symbol, —
But symbol of the hopelessness of the Infinite,
And cheerless, chill abyss of cosmic Mystery.

Vast are they, immutable and scapeless:
Points in a wondrous cryptogram of Order, —
But oh, the horror of their age-set dumbness.
Nothing to speak, or to reveal or deeply share,
Or weave into the fabric of our quivering knowledge,
But just their brutish, alien pomp of Order,
That has no pity: — big, distant, changeless.
A mote of vulgar beachsand much exaggerate
And tossed to wantoning abyss of multiplying distance,
And given a rage of light, would be the same, —
An awesome mystery of bullying bigness
Sprawled on the wasteful mesh of idle spaces; —
Such are these stars!

I tell the story over as the wise men say it
Of cosmic evolution; struggle here and warfare there,
And pain, pain, agony and pain
Splashing the texture of the weaving everywhere.
Progress, ah yes: the uprearing of a system,
Higher built up over lower, types complex
Triumphant over cruder, simpler types:
But what's the outcome, even the direction?
Why here at last is life, emerging life,
Victorious over matter, conscious of itself — so suffering:
These quivering myriad flecks of life —
Insect-shape, brute-shape, man-shape;
Every leaf and stalk and rock and water-flake
That earth, air, sea contain, peopled with life,
Foe-hunted, doom-haunted, waiting each
To prey upon some other like itself:

To have its fill and charter of continuance
In that degree it spoils some other life and gorges wreckage.

And, lord of all, life's best attainment, Man: —
Man dreaming and aspiring, and progressing —
Yea, man civilized.
And what is man, even man civilized and at his best?
Why I am Man — God pity me — and not the poorest,
I can aspire, and dream, and count my visions
And feel the urging anguish of my great ideals!
And what in all God's world, — stars, gravitations, rock-
laws,
Methods of flowers, customs of social order, —
Meets my ideals or dreams to give them comfort?
This great and bullying universe of matter
Crowds and besets me hard and grim,
Behind, before, with hindering weight of bafflement,
And loads my body against my soul with tense temptation;
And of my inner life, ideals and dreams
Surge yet in forms of pride and greed and lust —
The fine quintessence of what's brute below,
Not holier, only daintier, subtler, not so gross — that's all:
What is not life in being wars with my life
To drag it to frustration,
And all that's life — 'tis so, God help me! —
All that is life has only subtler passion
To urge to degradation, vileness and contempt,
Such as the lower range of being knows not.
And in this vast creation not a power
To take sides with me against debasement.

Just I alone, myself, in helpless struggle, —
With Nature, matter, tragedy of heredity,
Pitted remorselessly against me, —
Just I alone to battle.

For God — I say it boldly — Infinite God,
(Whatever man may make for meaning of him
Inexorable Order, Ultimate Unity, Soul of Energy) —
All that God is, *is on the other side* —
Not on Man's side, not on my side:
Part of the law of Order that makes stars pitiless,
The scheme of Being cruel, heredity's disaster,
Part of the pressing of the massed temptation,
Part of the elemental force to be hard fought with!

You say, He's in my better self, myself up-urging,
Finding His crown of being, crest of divine fulfillment
In just that leaping passion of my soul,
(Just mine, for me),
To be more than its making, more than what 'tis made of, —
That strange over-arching vision in my spirit
Of better than itself toward which it strives,
Which makes the wrestling with all things below itself
A glory of divineness, in the soul's straight uplift
On, on to its ideal — which is the soul of Godhood.

A pleasing dream, a pretty turn of sentiment;
But let's be fair with lowness; here's the other thought.
How is God there in other sense than that He's also here

In what's my lower self — and lower things
Beneath myself in world of lust and matter —
All my bafflement, all that's against myself —
This vaster bulking mystery of Being not myself
That pulls against my best, conspiring with my lower?
No reasonable thought of God, no logic for his being
That, sternly thought to its conclusion, makes not God
Most part of that which crowds its curse upon me: —
And I alone against it!
So I say again, *What is God worth,* and *Why is God?*

My soul grows feverish with dismay of dizzy daring:
The room is close and hot, the wild brain spins: —
And for a moment's respite (only physical)
I throw my window open, let the free air in.
'Tis evening's hour — a tender hush of twilight
Creeps shyly over a modest mountain brim
To be at home with Earth in silent pity.
The western sky glows rich with after-passion
Of day's farewell, and trees in tremulous stillness
Seem strangely yet aflate with subtle joyance.
And in the crest of one — I heed not which —
A wood thrush finds her heaven,
And pours an infinite soul of liquid song
Lavish upon the evening.
It falls athwart my mood like a ray of sunlight
Across a murky sky to make its murk triumphant
In what it gives to light for greatening glory.
Oh, but that wondrous mystery of bird-song:
It has no argument, brings no proof or evidence, —

But how it comes, a singing shaft of deity
To call my soul back to itself in glory,
Summon my manhood to its inherent greatness,
No longer brooding, doubting and defiant,
But strong, reliant, brave, peace-saturated,
At home with all that is *myself triumphant* —
And then I know,
And feel with wondrous understanding,
Just why God is — His name be praised for ever!

AS A CENTURY OPENS

Morning and Evening — Another Day

The age of Poets is gone; now no one sings
Save in the soft asides of pastime grace,
Or dainty ecstasies, — half-whisperings
Of spent emotions, drift from other days.
Why grieve? 'Tis morning-time, when men that live
Have other passions: — riotous zests that rise
Eager to grasp and hold, and know, and give
Quick challenge to a world of wild surprise;
When all that is, is changed to something new, —
New law, new faiths, new rashness of grim doubt,
New God: — new daring of man's leap to do
The tasks that once were God's, all God without.
When such day's evening falls with pausing peace,
What Voice shall sing the new time's ecstasies!

MY PRAYER

O God omnipotent!
Forever the Becoming: —
Glory fulfilling glory in still expectant wonder!
I know Thee not: . . .
Yet Thou art all my knowing;
And what I am,
Is the deep, deep secret, fathomless,
Of what Thou art, — forever!

This is my prayer: —
(I fear no death,
Nor Hell of timeless horror,
With fixed eternity of Doom
Whence soul must dread a deathless torture
To pay for earth's little sinning:
Nor fear I death's oblivion —
Were not that sweet comfort, — if all else were lost?
Nor fear I even
The ignoble bliss of tame and aimless Heaven
As weak souls dream it, —
Though if that were real
There were the soul's worse perdition!
Not these my dread
That I pray for Thy deliverance,
Saviour of all mankind:)
But —
O my God, — leave me not behind!
In thy vast Urge of Being,
In thine onrushing Glory of achieving wonder,

In thy great stress and agony of crowding progress, —
Leave me not behind!
Neither cast me off as wreckage: —
That the eternal tide of life with Thee
Sweep on —
And I not of its crest!
Grant me that no Tomorrow come,
And I be yet of Yesterday:
That no day pass,
When I pass not, — thy comrade, —
On through its crystal gates
To some new joy of what's becoming —
And has not been!
That I lose not the wonder of triumphant manhood,
Which suffers, agonizes,
Sacrifices bravely —
And with strong, stern laughter, —
(Sometimes sins, — and often falters,
As is human:
Sometimes fears and shrinks,
And loses heart, no doubt) —
Yet never wholly fails,
Nor thwarts utterly its onward impulse, —
Never loses step in the music-tread of progress, —
But ever grows and gains, —
And fights to win world's gain,
Trusting its destined Better:
Crowds forward to have some lusty part
In the beating down of wrong,
Uprooting evil, slaying injustice,
Stifling greed and lust, —

Purging all the earth of ignorance and folly
And mean hypocrisy, and sin and sloth, —
And winning God for the whole sum of being, —
(Nothing will I be, apart from all that is!) —
Winning God, —
Ay, God triumphant, urgent, —
God, the All-greatening Glory,
Gift of eternal Progress, —
God, who, — (with me) —
Is ever the Becoming!

Such is my prayer:
Give ear, O God:
And as I pray to Thee in Heaven that dwellest,
Most do I pray
Through Thee, the heaven-enthroned, —
To Thee in mine own soul that dwellest:
Ay, to Myself-of-self!

For if there be not in Myself
My prayer's straight answer —
What God can answer prayer?

THE FAITH THAT KEEPS US FEW

A Hymn for Radicals

Not as a multitude we press,
O Lord our God, to worship thee;
May thy rich blessing none the less
Rest eager on our two or three.

For we are met truth's dawn to see;
We dare to glimpse the wider view;
No past has had enough of thee!
'Tis larger seeking makes us few.

Give us staunch courage in our quest
For holier gain of love and right;
Give us deep patience as we rest
Unshrinking on thy tides of light.

Not all at once thy Best shall come;
And not all progress, seems the way;
And sometimes faith itself stands dumb:
And moods of doubting cloud our day.

Give us yet courage of our doubt:
Perchance it serves for progress, too;
But grant, we ne'er may live without
The daring faith that keeps us few.

QUATRAINS

The Visible God

I said: "God is not seen, — no eye can know;
By Faith's dim guess the way of life we go."
But look: — once heart has learned love's mystery,
What else than God, in all the world, to see?

Prayer

I tried to pray: my lips could find no word;
Heart's eager faith-pang voiceless in me stirred.
Then out from heaven God's comfort came to seek —
"Thy heart-throb touches mine: what need to speak?"

Narcissus

I caught a vision of the far-spread sea:
Beyond its rimming haze what mystery!
I looked to sky — what vast, strange silence there!
"But," spake my Soul: "These do but mirror Me!"

The Sky

'Twas good of God, that where men's eyes must face
The awful front of Heaven's abysmal space,
He veiled its bleak despair in pitying lie: —
This tender hush of friendliness, — the sky.

Modern Faith

I gasped for faith in God, while creeds grew stale;
I wrestled with grim doubts, — to no avail.
Spake One as God, deep in my soul's Soul, then: —
"Why fret for Me? Go, serve thy fellow men!"

Easter Morn

On Easter morn the joy of men shall be
Faith's blessed dream of Immortality.
O soul of mine, dream whatso'er you may:
But live thy Heaven — with God — on earth — to-day!

First Deity

The little child looked up, — for faith was young, —
And when the bed-side song of prayer was sung,
Said, wondering, "God so good and pure must be,
Mamma, it must be — you are God — for me!"

Maternity

God sent a little babe, through wrath of pain:
And pain was all — He snatched the babe again.
The mother gasped: "O God, why mock me so!"
God answered: "Wait: and thou — alone — shalt know!"

The Pimpernel

What if, midst barren crags of heartless doubt
That, bleak, all mantling grace of faith repell,
Sudden a yearning memory from some past gleam out,
So slight and shy, — heart's prayerful pimpernel!

The Wood Thrush

'Tis but a shred of vagrant song:
A tiny shaft of lilting glee;
But lo, o'er the dregs of a day so wrong,
How it brings a heaven of hope to me!

Autumn's Flame

The passion of the summer passed, —
Autumn, what noble peace thou hast!
Yet, o'er the hills of thy splendid calm,
How thy beauty leaps to flame, at last!

A New Year

No Past can chart the course of this new year:
With eager hope, half-veiled in misting fear,
I front its hazard; this my only prayer: —
Whate'er betide, staunchly my part I bear.

SEA MOODS—AND OTHERS

THE ISLES OF SHOALS

Bleak rocks so grim.
And never-resting sea,
And noble sky, whose misting rim
Melts to eternity; —
And in, and through, and over all,
A tender memory.

JUST AS I CAME HE WENT

Just as I came He went:
Listlessly wandering, I fell upon the place
Where misting shadows of gaunt rock-crag bent
To tangle weirdly wanton in my face,
While sobbed an ebbing sea.
Wan day gasped tremulous beauty in her dying:
In the west one star, blood-stained, was being born;
Mid haunting pines an elfish wind stalked sighing. —
As shuddering shadow of the crag, and sea's sad moan
Fell strangely over me,
Sudden a Presence passed. I saw not — did not hear:
But to the marrow of my soul I felt Its going
In creeping ecstasy of fear
And thrilling wonder that was more than knowing.
Was it a god — or demon — or the Soul of him
I loved so angrily and lost, a year ago,
Over Night's rim?
I know not, for we did not meet — my step lagged slow —
He, e'er I came, was gone:
But, going, cast behind in mystic fashion
The subtle spell of some supernal role
That fell like phantasy of a rare, strange passion
Upon the ache of my approaching soul —
And then passed on.

THE SPHINX-CRAG

There's a rock-crag — one midst the myriad of the wilderness
Of gaunt, fantastic shapes that gird the pounding sea —
Stalwart, — it fronts straight eastward, silent, dawn-kissed, sharp-hewed,
And rests against the sky in sheer nobility.
And he who quick discerns may mark its subtle sphinx-shape:
Strange mimicry of the wonder of Egyptian sands,
And feel how the great Sea's brooding, yearning Mystery
It mutely understands.

When World was young: man's foolishness not yet upon it,
And great God spake unveiled the elemental Word,
This Ocean listened, listened, — heard with an eager hearing;
And — lest it might forget — made chaunt of what it heard.
(*The midnight stars half-know: the mountains have forgotten*):
The great Sea ne'er forgets, repeating to its sands,
Forever and forever, that wild chaunt of mystic meaning
In tongue none can interpret, — strange in strangest lands:
— Perchance, amidst its myriad of rock wilderness, this sphinx-crag
That strange tongue understands.

Some day I there shall find it, searching through the rock-ways:

Shall strangely come upon it as it fronts the dawn;
(*Or when the dying day in glorious rage behind it*
Turns rock to gold, delirious e'er its hour be gone.)
And I shall silent wait before that face of Mystery
Soul-eager, with exultant hope for dawning day:
(*Or pensive, brooding o'er what wonder-joy shall greet me*
When not a day, but all Earth's glory dies away),
And, waiting there, behold, the secret shall o'erflood me;
Not from the rhythmic chaunt of never-resting sea,
Nor strange unveiling of God's all-pervading presence,
But from my soul's awakening to its own Divinity.
Dumb, not a word of secret weirdly whispered,
This echo of the wonder of Egyptian sands
Shall front me with my Soul, at last Itself discerning,
As God, too, understands!

THE LAUGHTER OF THE SEA

Three Moods

I. *First Variant*

Have you stood to hear old Ocean roar
His mighty monotone of mirth,
As though his plaything were the earth,
And mocking sport its myriad shore?
And how he laughs, the vast globe o'er,
A scornful laugh, as one whose girth
Of ponderous glee were better worth
Than all humanity's full score.
And billows he back a boisterous boast
To puny man along his coast:
"The centuries give mirth to me!
Ye sob your years, and ye laugh your days,
And ye die, e'er the sob or the laughter pays:
Eternity is my glut of glee!"

II. *Second Variant*

I wait to hear the glad sea roar
In mighty monotone of mirth;
As though the joy of all the earth
Laughed in its lashings, evermore.
Oh, the shouting laughter of the sea:
The deep, strong joy of Eternity!

All life seems good, — so clear the sky;
The wind has rare tonic for the soul;
And a cadence of heart keeps time with the roll
Of the brave, rash waves, that leap so high.
Oh, the leap of the sea, the laugh of the sea:
The rash, brave joy of Eternity!

I dumbly wait, and my eager heart,
Lashing with hopes it cannot tell, —
Rash with the passion of the spell
Of this wild sea's inner counterpart, —
(*Oh, the passionate laughter of the sea:*
The wild, strange joy of Eternity!) —

Finds for the silence of its dream
All utterance in this shouting sea: —
Yet the laughing joy of Eternity
Scantly could speak my joy — 'twould seem.
Oh, the shouting laughter of the sea:
The deep, strong joy of Eternity!

I stand to hear old Ocean roar
In mighty monotone of glee,
As through the joy of Eternity
Laughed in its lashing, evermore:
Laughed in its kissing of every shore;
Laughed in the passion of every sea;
The deep, strong joy of What Shall Be,
When the foolishness of man is o'er.

. . . Would that my foolishness might cease!
These restless hopes, this wayward dream,
Wasting the soul with fruitless strain;
That I might look to the Sea again,
And, as of old, its music seem
The laughter of my joy — and peace!

MOONLIGHT ON THE SEA

The Moon saw the Sea with a gaze that was cold,
From distant, gentle pride;
And the Sea laughed back with ardor bold
And an eager passion, wild and strong.
Then the yielding Moon dropped one kiss of gold, —
A kiss that was tremulous and long:
And the Sea was satisfied.

AGAMENTICUS

From Ogunquit Cliffs

My mountain's but a modest hill, I ween,
Lifting its gentle head not very high
To pierce the glory of the westward sky:
Nor grimly stands with harsh or awful mien.
Many a lordlier mountain peak I've seen, —
Bold, grandly rugged, grim in majesty,
Wreathed ever in wild clouds that constant lie
Nestling and homing their stern crags between.
Not so my gentle mount; yet, oh, for me
It soars in tranquil grace of purple calm
Bathed in a wondrous spell of mystery,
Holy and sweet and strong in tender charm:
And lifts, ah, lifts my soul with God to be: —
Triumphant thus in shy nobility.

NIGHTFALL OVER THE MARSHES

Oh, the far-spread hush of the grey marshland
And the long, low line of lingering light
That parts with the grace of a golden strand
The just-dead day from the just-born night!

I feel, with a surging tide of peace,
Its spell of silence o'er me fall;
I am glad for the nestling night's release;
And glad for the day that is past recall.

For beneath that long, low line of glow
Is buried the day, with its freight of cares,
Its fragile frets and its mocking show
And its wrecked resolves, and its bleak despairs;

And above that light-line's lingering grace,
Dawns the teeming tenderness of night,
Its merging soothe of sleep's sweet ways,
With the wonder of dream's strange delight.

The dream shall know no fretting cares,
But the heart shall weave with fancy free
Its comfort of unfettered prayers
In the thrill of joys it has longed might be.

Lo, over the marge of the lingering light
One star has awakened from day's swoon;
One star alone, — and beside it, slight,
Is the first shy whisper of new moon.

The star is there as my heart's glad faith,
That brighter grows as the day is gone: —
And the crescent grace of that moon's shy breath
Is to hang one wistful wish upon!

FOR A CANDLE-LIGHT SERVICE

Isles of Shoals

God of the Vastness of the far-spread sea,
And tender silence of the starlit sky,
Whose way upon the deep so still can be,
Whose Voice is whispered wind's tranquillity:

Grant us thy peace beyond all evening's balm;
Out of thy heart of peace, O Father, share
Now with thy children heaven's strange deeps of calm,
And be to us the triumph of our prayer.

For good has been thy gift, — the day now past:
Its joy so eager, zest of life so strong;
Each glimpse of beauty lovelier than the last,
Each leap of thought winged to exultant song.

And now thine after-gift, this hush of night,
Falls with its reverence of completing grace.
Father, by day we glimpsed thy raiment bright,
Soothe now our silenced souls to see thy face.

That thus, with thee, all else of life forgot,
With thee we fold these precious hours away;
That thus, O God, with thee who slumberest not
We wait thy glory of another day.

THE CALL OF THE SEA

(A Sestina)

What means this hush of mystic call,
That whispers in o'er the misting sea
Just at the hour when night doth fall?
Through the heaven of silence o'er-brooding all
Comes the hush of a voice, that grows to be
A call of wondrous joy to me!

Is its mystic joy alone for me?
Is there something so secret in that call, —
As though 'mid all earth's sounds could be
But one strange voice come out of the sea; . . .
And I as I list must receive it all, —
Must heed its whole, — or the secret fall?

What if its secret eke should fall;
And the voice be dumbness, — failing me?
What if, though the earth were listening, all, —
There never an ear could catch that call:
For only I have the heart of the sea, —
Or can dream what its secret strange must be!

Oh, what can its mystic portent be?
Through my thrill of joy doth a bleak fear fall,
And a chill of ice breathe in o'er the sea? . . .
For the joy of the joy that comes to me
In the witching hush of this twilight call: —
Is it ache of madness, after all?

Dare I hope for a joy transcending all
That hope can dream when best dreams be, —
And feel in the silence of that call, —
In the glory of hush when the night doth fall, —
His holy presence near to me . . .
Who loved as I love the misting sea?

Who loved with the vastness of the sea
And the tender hush o'er-brooding all!
Is the dumbness of night for all but me: . . .
That I, — and the sea, — and that dear heart be
Alone, of all being, as night doth fall . . .
We three, — in the secret of the call?

Call of the sea, the misting sea,
Fall softly with night-hush over all:
Be hush to the world . . . but Voice to me!

BY THE SLEEPLESS SEA

A Song

The dawn creeps soft o'er the sleeping world,
And turns to pearl the sleepless sea;
The dawn creeps soft o'er the sleeping world,
And, lo, across the sleepless sea
Wafts in a breath of hope for me,
Who watch all night by the sleepless sea.

For, like the sea, I cannot sleep;
The earth is hushed in wondrous peace:
But, like the sea, I cannot sleep,
And though all Heaven drench earth with peace,
This quenchless ache of woe in me
Throbs like the sob of the sleepless sea!

Oh why, beneath thy surface grace, —
Thy light of blue, thy laughlike song, —
Oh why, beneath thy surface grace,
That under-sob in thy laughlike song? —
As though thy joy were tragedy
So trist and strange, O sleepless sea!

The dawn creeps soft o'er the sleeping world,
And turns to pearl the sleepless sea;
The dawn creeps soft o'er the sleeping world, —
But why, o'er the moan of the sleepless sea
Comes any hope that can comfort me, —
Who have watched all night by the sleepless sea!

AFTERGLOW

Clouds of the western sky,
So boldly, strongly, weirdly massed
To thwart the fine serenity of passing day;
Now that the sun is set,
What rage of beauty do you answer back
To his retreating bafflement of light: —
Gold, purple, wondrous orange,
Passion of hot flame,
And eager exultation of the heart of roses;
That all that day had known
Of level radiance of sun's unquenched light
Were tame to what your quenching mass now gives
As afterthought of day's high miracle of light!

How dost thou make it thus,
God, with the soul's deep living:
(Giver of light and life and joy unspeakable!)
Not because day was clear:
Not because tide unbroken
Of a serene prosperity
Has flooded richly o'er me in full noon of blessing,
Quivers my soul this hour in tingling joyance;
But massing gloom of bafflements and dismay —
Hopes broken, deep faiths shattered,
Bitter tests of strength and toils of spirit,
Have murked for me the light of life
In cumulate cloud of trial: —
And now from out of these:
From out of these, O God, Lightgiver,

Bursts forth the radiance of thy deeper love,
Ay, flames and glows and rages
With an all-passionate joy of wondrous beauty,
To thrill me to deep silence of thanksgiving:
Thy thwarting, grim, obscuring clouds of blessing
In their last gift of light
Thus made to tower triumphant o'er the passing light
They massed to hide!

A SONG SPARROW

At the Isles of Shoals

How did yon joyous sparrow learn so true
The very heart of God? Vast spreads the sea —
The Holy Presence — in strange mystery,
Luring the dream of sight beyond sight's view;

And overhead, in splendrous hush of blue,
The yearning peace of God's great Sympathy!
Grim, bleak and stern, these rock-crags seem to be
God's utter word of Might, — long ages through, —
Omnipotent!

But there, where rose-twigs nod,
My little bird, not vast, nor strange, nor strong,
Sings forth its little soul in crystal glee;
And through its tiny song there comes to me
That whispered peace my heart had sought so long: —
The tender friendship of a near-by God.

NIGHTFALL AT OGUNQUIT

I gaze far off to the glowing west,
And the world aflame before me lies,
As the sunset passion of the skies
Pours o'er the rim of yon mountain crest; —
I turn, and such hue of quenchless rest
From east-spread ocean meets my eyes,
It seems as the peace of paradise,
The deep, strange joyance of the blest.
O passion of the sunset sky:
My soul thrills eager to thy spell
And the zest of life leaps high to thee!
O tender patience of the sea:
Beyond all joy that earth can tell,
I yield to thy hush of Eternity.

AT SUNSET

We waited, hushed, at evenfall,
When glowing Heaven urged back her king
With lavish gold, such bribe to bring
Less than a god quick to her call;
Until, despairing of it all,
In twilight fading soft did fling,
Her roseate veil of sorrowing, —
A beauty-mist — for evening's pall.
Heart ached for joyance of such scene!
And she who stood beside me there
Gazed with a soul's responsive grace;
Ah me! What God on sunset's screen
Wrote large, in beauty trist and rare,
He finer wrote on her sweet face!

THE FRIENDLY HILLS OF ROWE

O friendly hills, fair hills of modest Rowe!
Not with a bleak disdain ye proudly rise,
Austere and cold, to meet majestic skies,
As tho' in scorn of all that lies below!
I watch your drifting shadows come and go
With pensive, eager longing in my eyes:
And lo! a noble softness o'er you lies,
As 'twere the grace of glad smile's overflow.
Like comrade's joy, your rugged strength to me:
And lift of sweet ideal your steadfast climb,
And tender reverence your mantling grace.
Ah, I shall turn my thoughts in other days
And soothe my restless soul to peace sublime
Remembering your fine nobility!

BEETHOVEN'S EIGHTH SYMPHONY

Surely a glad sun must have laughed, that day,
Routing the vagrant glooms and misting showers
Which had been brooding bleakly through dull hours;
And all the air, — perchance it then was May, —
Thrilled to the dance of breezes wild with play
Of frollicking fragrances of springtime flowers;
And a mad skylark leaped from dew-drenched bowers
Straight to sky's utmost rapture, with a lay
That made dawn lyric; —
Then this Master-Soul —
Oft veiled in noble tragedy of fate
That sobbed andantes, shouted as a boy
A riotous rage of laughter, — sought the goal,
Lark-like, of sky's abyss of light, — elate
To rollic with the splendor of his joy.

TCHAIKOVSKY'S SIXTH SYMPHONY

(Second Movement)

It seemed as something rudely lavish, there;
As though a crystal wine-glass, rashly filled,
Sudden ran over, and the fine wine spilled
To slopping waste: — a generous hand lacked care
To make a grace of pouring dainty share,
And spoiled the nice occasion had been willed
To joy a friend. . . . One wished the measure stilled, —
Or tamed to sweet convention; — wherefore dare
Such wanton innovation?
Then one's heart
Caught in surprise the cadence, — quick it sang, —
Sang to a new, rare amplitude of grace;
Today had snatched a beauty other days
Had never dreamed — and wild pulse, leaping, sprang
To splendid spaciousness of rhythmic art!

DREAM WITHIN DREAM

All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.
E. A. Poe.

All that Life is, is dream;
The wise ones have said it for ages;
Vain the long chapters that seem
Deep-graven as Fact on its pages.
All that Life is, is dream:
Such is the wisdom of sages.

Out of it someday will come
Such strange, abysmal awakening!
What mirth for the Gods that are dumb,
Yet the weave of the dream have in making: —
Out of it someday shall come
Fate's comedy weird of our Waking! . . .

What of the dream in the dream:
This folly my heart e'er is spinning, —
A passion of hope, and a gleam
Of quenchless desire for Love's winning?
Oh, what of the dream in the dream
That my heart in its folly is spinning?

From the dream that is Life, dispossessed,
Shall the dream of Love in the dreaming

Emerge as the Fact unsuppressed,
And conquer the doubt of its seeming?
From the dream that is Life dispossessed,
Shall Love laugh, — triumphant in dreaming?

EN FAMILLE

REMEMBERING

There's rapture now in just remembering,
Out of these humbling years of growing older,
When my dear lady flashes by, to fling
Smiles of indulgent kindness o'er her shoulder,
Scorning stale wisdom with disdainful grace
From out the largess of Youth's speedier pace; —
There's rapture now in just remembering
How when this miss was humbly six years old,
After some bedtime story had been told,
She'd nestle to my shoulder snug and tight,
And with caught breath of a surprised delight
Pour from her long-lashed eyes of honest grey
Such flood of trustful wonder, — as would say, —
(There's wistful rapture just remembering) —
She surely thought
Her Dad knew everything!

MY LADY, AGED FOUR, WHO WEARS GLASSES

Ah, quaint is the mischief-gleam quick in the eyes
Of my lady, aged four, who wears glasses;
They twinkle with frolic, each hour new surprise,
With a sheen that all starlight surpasses.
For out of heaven's blue
Dashed with evening's sad hue, —
If you knew as I do,
Oh, eager and true,
How light of that blue, and the dusk melting through,
Made sparkle of stars commonplace in their skies,
You would love as I love those mischief-ful eyes
Of my lady, aged four, who wears glasses!

Sometimes there is coaxing, — ah me, what a spell
Has my lady, aged four, who wears glasses!
There is witchery rank, all disfavor to quell
In those eyes of my quaintest of lasses.
They leap from their glee
To such dire tragedy,
One melts but to see
How sad they can be:
So sad and so wistful and urgent, — ah me!
He's a wretch can withstand them, or coldly denies
The prize of the coaxing of those coaxing eyes
Of my lady, aged four, who wears glasses.

And sometimes, o'ertaken by sins baby-black,
My lady, aged four, who wears glasses

Comes downcast and shamed-faced, as one who would lack
Not a trapping of guilt as she passes.
And out from her shame,
And the gloom of her blame,
And the cheeks' sullen flame,
And the woe of the same,
Those eyes, all so downcast, yet coyly will claim
All the melting forgiveness from heart can arise;
And censure will flee for those shame-smitten eyes
Of my lady, aged four, who wears glasses.

And sometimes, as straight as an arrow can leap,
My lady, aged four, who wears glasses
Will pour from those eyes, — from some source strangely deep,
A light that all other surpasses.
Oh, the love that can glow,
And quiver and grow
From its ebb to its flow
In quick tide-wave, as though
All the wealth of its store were cast in one throw!
Ah, then the rare light of love's dainty sunrise
Makes prophecy startling in those rare eyes
Of my lady, aged four, who wears glasses!

JUST BORN

Now here comes Eileen!
O rare little Queen:
So dainty and winsome, and happy, I ween;
Are her eyes dark or fair?
Has she gold in her hair?
And dimples and smiles on her lips debonair?

'Tis great time to be born,
As a new age crowds on,
And a world is all glowing with faith's eager sheen;
I'm prophetic for you,
Darling babe, — be it true! —
Some day all the world shall thank God for Eileen!

A VALENTINE

Come, little sweetheart, with laughing eyes;
Come, little maid, with rippling hair:
Can you half-guess, without surprise,
Whose love hath bade the good Saint bear
This Valentine to you?
Saint Valentine is very spry
To make the gay love-tokens fly,
This day when all the world is young;
But you may search all men among,
To find a lover true: —
None can love better, sweetheart mine,
Than he who sends this Valentine,
This Valentine to you.

SWEET SIXTEEN

Ah me! my lady now is sweet sixteen;
A radiant flower of dawning womanhood
Shy flushes where the bud of childhood stood,
And child is gone, — is gone for aye, I ween.
For sixteen years we've watched youth's changing mien, —
The babe . . . the child . . . the maid: — half understood,
Half dimly guessed the chaste vicissitude
Of greatening grace. And now we wait between
Sweet memories of a past, and prophecies
More sweet for golden grace of coming days. . . .
Dear child, whose eyes have glimpsed the distant haze
Of eager life-dreams, — may God grant you this:
The love-joy of the child shall cling to kiss
To deeper joys of love your woman's ways!

ANOTHER VALENTINE

L'Envoi

O dear-heart, fair and true:
O dear-heart, with those sweet brown eyes,
Holy with faith that never dies:
I fain would send to you, —
This day when young hearts eager burn
In devious ways of love to turn, —
My own true Valentine.
'Tis not for us Love's first fair Spring:
I cannot bring
The rapturous shyness of youth's fire,
And wild desire;
But out of noble years we share,
With wealth of harvests rich and fine, —
What you have given in treasures rare
To make me know love's worth divine, —
More than all youth could dream were here,
I bring to make my Valentine.

DATE DUE

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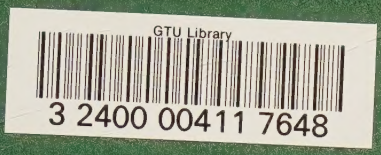

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